

Message Text

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13
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

EB-07 DHA-02 /067 W
----- 076356

R 300853Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2243
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, BG
SUBJECT: ARREST OF KAZI ZAFAR AHMED

REF: DACCA 4999

1. THE VERNACULAR PRESS, WHICH HAD NOT PRINTED FOR THREE DAYS BECAUSE OF THE EID HOLIDAYS, REPORTED THE ARREST SEPTEMBER 25 OF KAZI ZAFAR AHMED, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE UNITED PEOPLE'S PARTY (UPP). ZAFAR, WHO HAD THE PREVIOUS WEEK DELIVERED A SPEECH HIGHLY CRITICAL OF HIS POLITICAL OPPONENTS (REFTEL), WAS ARRESTED OSTENSIBLY BECAUSE OF HIS ROLE IN A LABOR DISPUTE IN THE TONGI COTTON TEXTILE MILLS NORTH OF DACCA. ZAFAR IS BEING HELD AT DACCA CENTRAL JAIL AWTHOUGH NO FORMAL CHARGES HAVE BEEN REPORTED.

2. BECAUSE THE TONGI TEXTILE WORKERS' LABOR DISPUTE HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED EITHER IN THE BENGALI OR ENGLISH PRESS, THE DETAILS ARE FUZZY. HOWEVER, WE ARE TOLD THAT THE WORKERS HAD DEMANDED FROM THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION (MLA) EXTRA FRINGE BENEFITS SUCH AS IMPROVED MEDICAL CARE,
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BETTER HOUSING AND NEW UNIFORMS. WHEN THEIR DEMANDS WERE

REJECTED, THE WORKERS WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE UPP
LABOR FRONT, THE BANGLADESH LABOR FEDERATION, CHOSE TO BOY-
COTT THE EID HOLIDAYS AND EARN THE FRINGE BENEFITS BY
WORKING OVER THE HOLIDAY. IN THE ENSUING DISPUTE, KAZI ZAFAR, V
AS HEAD OF THE LABOR FRONT, WAS ARRESTED.

3. COMMENT. WHETHER ZAFAR'S ARREST IS RELATED TO HIS
RECENT POLITICAL BROADSIDE IS UNCLEAR. IT IS OBVIOUS, HOW-
EVER, THAT THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION HAS ATTEMPTED
TO KEEP THE ARREST QUIET. LAST NIGHT, FAZAL KAMAL, THE
EDITOR OF THE LEFTIST WEEKLY HOLIDAY, SPECULATED TO POLOFF
THAT PERHAPS ZAFAR WAS ARRESTED AS AN EXAMPLE TO ALL
POLITICIANS TO BE CAUTIOUS AS THEY START MORE EXTENSIVE
POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. WHATEVER THE CASE, KAMAL POINTED
OUT WRYLY THAT POLITICIANS ARE USUALLY WELL TREATED IN JAIL. CHESLAW

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